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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 001208

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. NEULING
SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2015

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL ZI

SUBJECT: GOZ BURIES ANOTHER HERO

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell for reasons 1.5 b/d

¶1. (U) Minister of Indigenization and Empowerment and ZANU-PF Politburo member Josiah Tungamirai died on August 25 in a South African clinic reportedly of kidney failure. The GOZ quickly named him a national hero and buried him on August 28 at Hero's Acre. According to local media accounts, Tungamirai had been plagued by kidney problems for at least the past five years) he received a transplant from his brother in 2000. Retired General Solomon Mujuru, effective head of the dominant Zezuru ethnic sub-group clique, played an uncharacteristically public role in Tungamirai's funeral.

COMMENT

¶2. (C) The death of Zimbabwe's respected first black Air Force commander comes as a blow to the regime's morale. Tungamirai's liberation war credentials, wide popularity, and relative youth (57) made him a pivotal ally of the Mujuru clique in historically divided Masvingo. His passing leaves retired General Vitalis Zvinavashe) an Emmerson Mnangagwa ally also from Masvingo) as the Zimbabwe's most preeminent war hero and retired military officer.

DELL